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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to determine the knowledge of Tennessee public school finance on the part of teachers, businessmen, school administrators, elected officials, and industrial workers. Students in a class on public school finance administered the questionnaire to over 1,000 subjects. Results revealed that respondents feel that public education is not adequately funded, although business people were generally prone to estimate present school funding as higher than did the educators. Those from the business community were also less favorable toward increasing some types of school support. Few differences of opinion were found between teachers and administrators. Little support was shown for an income tax in Tennessee, and the sales tax and property tax were picked as the most desirable taxes. (Author/JM)

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A COMPARISON OF OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS
WITH REGARD TO KNOWLEDGE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL
FINANCE IN THE UPPER CUMBERLAND REGION OF TENNESSEE

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Statement of the Problem

The problem in this study was to determine the knowledge of public school finance of teachers, businessmen, school administrators, elected officials, and industrial workers in the Upper Cumberland Region of Tennessee.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because the development and maintenance of a quality public school program is dependent on adequate financing. In order to secure adequate financing for a school system, school officials must gain the support of the citizens within the area served by the school system. In order to gain the financial support of its constituents, school officials must determine what the people of the school system know about school finance. The questions used in this study were selected to determine how much several occupational groups (teachers, school administrators, businessmen, elected officials, and industrial workers) know about teacher salaries, the amount of money provided by the different levels of government for education, taxation of schools, and other facts about financing public schools in Tennessee.

When school officials have information such as was determined in this study, they may improve their public relations programs. Perhaps many citizens in a school system are not very concerned about the adequate financing of schools because they do not understand how schools are financed or to what extent the local school system is adequately financed.

Research Procedures

The idea for this study was gained from a paper presented at the Mid-South Educational Research Association Annual Convention in 1976 by Dr. Ronald R. Partridge entitled, "A Comparison of Groups with Regard to Knowledge of Public School Finance." The questions were adapted as were the groups involved to be more meaningful for the Upper Cumberland Region of Tennessee. Students enrolled at Tennessee Technological University in Public School Finance (ASED 744) collected the data as a part of the requirements for that course. A questionnaire was prepared by the instructor of the Public School Finance class working with one section of the class. The questionnaire was then administered as a survey form by each student in the class to 25 persons in their community to five teachers, businessmen, school administrators, elected officials, and industrial workers, respectively. The form was administered by the members of several different sections of the School Finance class, 50 students representing 30 communities. The data from the questionnaires were tabulated and analyzed to determine comparisons among the occupational groups (teachers, businessmen, school administrators, elected officials, and industrial workers). Chi-square was the statistical technique used to determine the level of significance of the data.

Method of Analysis

The analysis of data from the 196 returns was completed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This program is loaded on the system for the D. W. Mattson Computing Center at Tennessee Technological University. Specifically, frequencies and percentages were computed for the data to determine the reactions of the sample to each of the items. A cross-tabulation and a chi square test of significance were computed to test null hypotheses of no statistical difference across subgroups for each of the

items. A total of 40 tests were computed - a comparison by occupation, sex, age and whether the respondent has children in school was made over each of the ten items on the questionnaire.

The results from the analysis are reported in the following pages. The item is listed as it was on the questionnaire followed by the overall frequency and percentage tabulations. If statistical significance at the 0.05 level existed between subgroups, a table of frequencies and percentages and the computed chi square analysis is included. A brief discussion is included to add meaning to the table results.

Presentation of Findings

Item 1. What is the average salary of a public school teacher in Tennessee this year? A. \$8,000; B. \$10,000; C. \$12,000; D. \$14,000; E. \$16,000.
Overall Results: A. 14(7.8); B. 92(47.7); C. 71(36.8); D. 12(6.2); E. 3(1.6)

It is evident from the results that almost one-half of the group believe the average salary to be \$10,000 per year. Only 36.8% of the group chose the correct answer of \$12,000 per year. Further analysis comparing the results by occupation, sex, age, and whether the respondent had children in school revealed no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level of significance.

Item 2. Do you feel teachers are paid enough? A. Yes B. No.
Overall Results: A. 46(23.8) B. 147(76.2)

Comparison by Occupation:

Teachers:	A. 3(7.5)	B. 37(92.5)
Business:	A. 11(28.2)	B. 28(71.8)
School Administrators:	A. 4(11.4)	B. 31(88.6)
Elected Officials:	A. 13(32.5)	B. 27(67.5)
Industrial Workers:	A. 15(38.5)	B. 24(61.5)

Chi square = 15.51; df = 4; Significance = 0.004

It is evident from these results that a majority, 76.2% of those who responded to the questionnaire believe that teachers are inadequately paid. Further comparisons by sex, age and whether the respondent had children in school revealed no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level. When a comparison among occupational groups was computed it resulted in a chi square value of 15.51, statistically significant at the 0.004 level of measurement. Inspection of the differences indicates that teachers and school administrators are in very strong agreement that salaries are inadequate while individuals from outside education - business and elected officials - were not as nearly unanimous as the professional educators. A substantial percentage of those in industrial jobs believe that teachers are adequately paid.

Item 3. Which of the following methods would be best for determining raises for teachers: A. Merit B. Across the Board C. Seniority & Merit D. Cost of Living E. Training & Seniority.

Overall Results: A. 47(24.2); B. 12(6.2); C. 52(26.8); D. 27(13.9); E. 56(28.9)

It is noted from the results that little consensus is reflected in the findings from these data. One thing that is of interest is that only 6.2% of the group believe in across the board raises for teachers. Further analysis comparing results by occupation, sex, age, and whether the respondent had children in school revealed no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level.

Item 4. Should teachers be given tenure, after a probationary period, that guaranteed employment for satisfactory work? A. Yes B. No

Overall Results: A. 158(81.4) B. 36(18.6)

Comparison by Occupation:

Teachers:	A. 34(87.2)	B. 5(12.8)
Business:	A. 25(61.0)	B. 16(39.0)
School Administrators:	A. 33(91.7)	B. 3(8.3)
Elected Officials:	A. 32(82.1)	B. 7(17.9)
Industrial Workers:	A. 34(87.2)	B. 5(12.8)

Chi square = 15.56; df = 4; Significance = 0.004

The results reveal that 81.4% of those who responded agree with the item. Further analysis comparing the results by sex, age, and whether the respondent had children in school revealed no statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level of measurement. When the results were compared by occupation of respondent it is noted that the chi square results showed statistical significance at the 0.004 level. Inspection indicates that though 61.0% of those in the business community favor tenure for teachers, this is considerably lower than in any of the other occupational groups.

Item 5. Which level of government provides the most money for public schools in Tennessee? A. Federal B. State C. Local

Overall Results: A. 29(150) B. 148(76.7) C. 16(8.3)

Comparison by age:

35 or under:	A. 21(22.3)	B. 66(70.2)	C. 7(7.4)
Over 35:	A. 8(8.1)	B. 82(82.8)	C. 9(9.1)

Chi square = 7.68; df = 2; Significance = 0.022

The results indicate that a large majority of 76.7% believe that the state provides the most money for public schools. Further analysis comparing the results by occupation, sex, and whether the respondent had children in school revealed no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level of measurement. When the results were compared by age of respondents it is noted that individuals 35 years of age and under were more likely to indicate

federal funding than those over 35 years of age. This resulted in fewer of the younger group choosing the category, state funding, since the number choosing local funding was approximately equal.

Item 6. What type of tax produces most of the money spent for public schools in Tennessee? A. Property Tax B. Sales Tax C. State Income Tax D. Federal Income Tax E. Wheel Tax?

Overall Results: A. 89(45.9) B. 84(43.3) C. 8(4.1) D. 10(5.2) E. 3(1.5)

Comparison by sex:

Male: A. 59(43.4) B. 62(45.8) C. 3(2.2) D. 10(7.4) E. 2(1.5)

Female: A. 30(51.7) B. 22(37.9) C. 5(8.6) D. 0(0.0) E. 1(1.7)

Chi square = 9.51; df = 4; Significance = 0.050

Results from the analysis reveal that the consensus of opinion regarding what taxation provides the most money for schools was almost equally divided between the property tax and the sales tax. Further analysis comparing the results by occupation, age, and whether the respondent had children in school revealed no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level of measurement. When the results were compared according to sex of the respondent it is noted that females chose the property tax more often than their male counterparts and selected the sales tax less frequently than the male group. Also, no females selected the federal income tax while 7.4% of the males selected that source of revenue.

Item 7. Rank, in your opinion, the following sources for providing money for supporting public schools in Tennessee. A. Property Tax B. Sales Tax C. State Income Tax D. Gambling Tax E. Tax on Alcohol & Tobacco Products

RELATIVE RANKINGS OF DIFFERENT REVENUE PRODUCING METHODS

	Choice 1	Choice 2	Choice 3	Choice 4	Choice 5
Property Tax	73(37.4)	86(43.9)	15(7.7)	4(2.1)	17(8.7)
Sales Tax	61(31.1)	71(36.4)	14(7.2)	11(5.6)	38(19.5)
State Income Tax	29(15.0)	25(13.0)	49(25.4)	14(7.3)	76(39.4)
Gambling Tax	16(8.7)	9(4.9)	54(29.3)	56(30.4)	49(26.6)
Tax on Alcohol & Tobacco Products	14(7.7)	2(1.1)	57(31.1)	99(54.5)	11(6.0)

The results depicted in the table indicate that the property tax is considered the most important source for providing revenue for schools in Tennessee. The sales tax is a close second with 31.1% indicating it as a first choice compared with the 37.4% opting for the property tax. Interestingly, the state income tax ranked last behind the tax on alcohol and tobacco and the gambling tax.

Item 8. Would you be willing to pay more money in taxes so that schools would not need to raise money through magazine drives, candy sales, "king and queen contests", etc.? A. Yes B. No

Overall Results: A. 126(64.6) B. 69(35.4)

Comparison by Occupation:

Teachers:	A. 30(75.0)	B. 10(25.0)
Business:	A. 22(55.0)	B. 18(45.0)
School Administrators:	A. 30(83.3)	B. 6(16.7)
Elected Officials:	A. 26(65.0)	B. 14(35.0)
Industrial Workers:	A. 18(46.2)	B. 21(53.8)

Chi square = 14.84; df = 4; Significance = 0.005

The results from the analysis reveal that a considerable majority of 64.6% indicated that they would be willing to pay additional taxes if fund raising programs could be eliminated. Further analysis comparing the results

by sex, age, and whether the respondent had children in school revealed no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level of measurement. When the results were compared across occupational groups statistical significance at the 0.005 level was obtained. The differences noted from the results were considerably varied ranging from a low agreement with the item of 46.2% by the industrial workers to 83.3% by the school administrators. Though the majority of the business group were in agreement with the item the margin was not substantial.

Item 9. Approximately how much money is being spent per child for public education this year in Tennessee? A. \$600 B. \$1,200 C. \$1,800 D. \$2,400 E. \$3,000

Overall Results: A. 73(37.8); B. 85(44.0); C. 20(10.4); D. 9(4.7); E. 6(3.1)

Inspection of the results reveals that most of the respondents are of the opinion that the expenditure per child in Tennessee is \$1200 per child or less. Comparison by occupation, sex, age, and whether the respondent had children in school revealed no statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level of measurement.

Item 10. Where do you think Tennessee ranks compared to the other states based on the amount of money spent this year per child for public education: A. 6 B. 16 C. 26 D. 36 E. 46

Overall Results: A. 1(0.5); B. 8(4.1); C. 12(6.2); D. 49(25.3); E. 124(63.9)

Comparison by Occupation:

Teachers: A. 0(0.0) B. 1(2.5) C. 2(5.0) D. 9(22.5) E. 28(70.0)

Business: A. 1(2.5) B. 1(2.5) C. 2(5.0) D. 14(35.0) E. 22(55.0)

School Administrators: A. 0(0.0) B. 0(0.0) C. 1(2.8) D. 7(19.4) E. 28(77.8)

Elected Officials: A. 0(0.0) B. 0(0.0) C. 4(10.0) D. 8(20.0) E. 28(70.0)

Industrial Workers: A. 0(0.0) B. 6(15.8) C. 3(7.2) D. 11(28.9) E. 18(47.4)

Chi square = 28.43; df = 16; Significance = 0.028

The results from the analysis revealed that a majority of 63.9% accurately indicated that Tennessee ranks 46th in the nation on the amount of money spent per child for education. Further comparison by occupation revealed that a significantly different response was obtained at the 0.028 level of measurement. Only 47.4% of the industrial workers indicated that the state ranked 46th while 77.8% of the school administrators and 70.0% of the teachers indicated the correct choice. No statistically significant differences were revealed when comparisons were made by sex, age and whether the respondent had children in school.

Summary and Conclusions

The results from the investigation reveal that those who responded to the questionnaire feel that public education and educators are not adequately paid but they are not consistent in their answers to sources of funding for education. When the reflections of non-school personnel are compared to those of the business and labor market, the support for increasing and maintaining school funds is considerably different. Those from the business community were generally less favorable toward supporting increased support in both financial and employment related areas. They were also prone to rate the present conditions of school funding higher than the group of educators. Within the educator group it is noted that few differences in opinion are found to exist between teachers and school administrators.

In the area of taxation it is noted that little support is shown for the income tax in Tennessee. More of the respondents indicated the income tax as a last or fifth choice of taxation than any other form. The sales tax and the property tax were picked as the first two choices.